

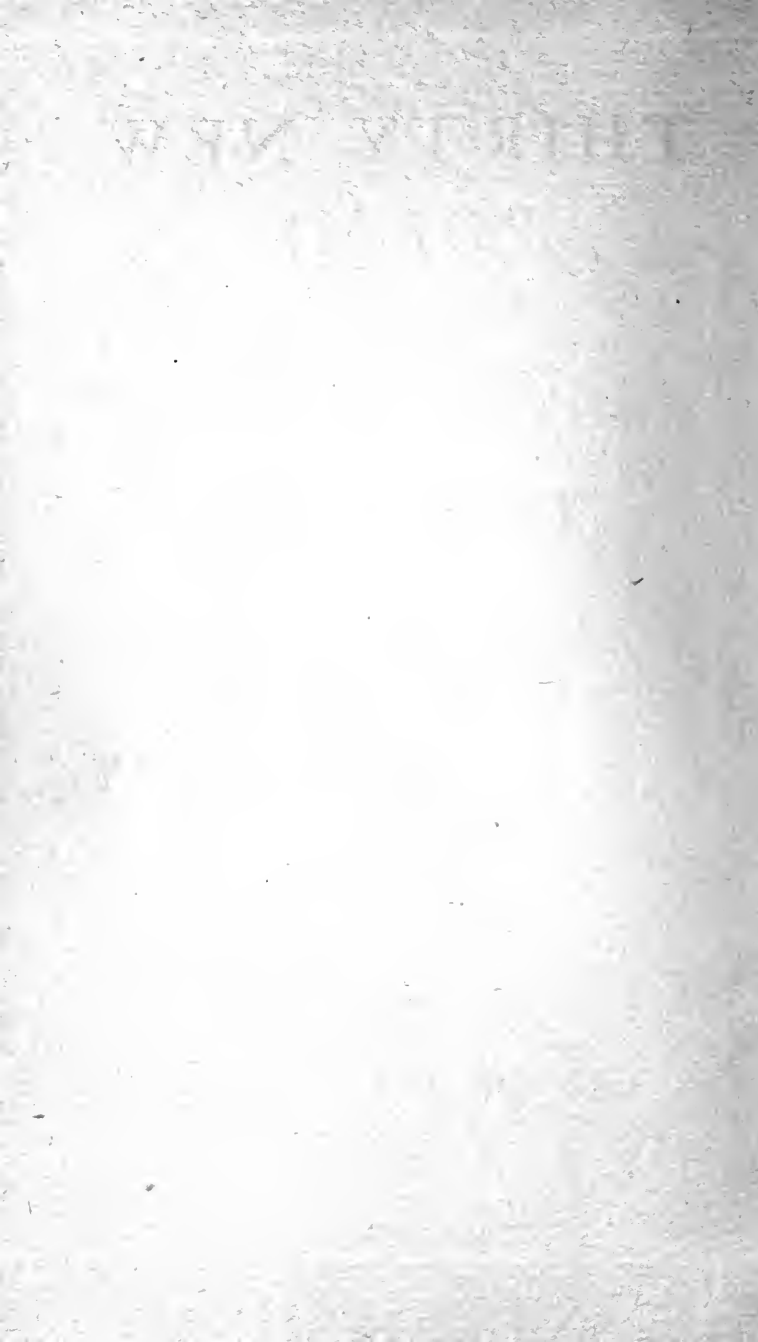


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THIRTY NEW POEMS

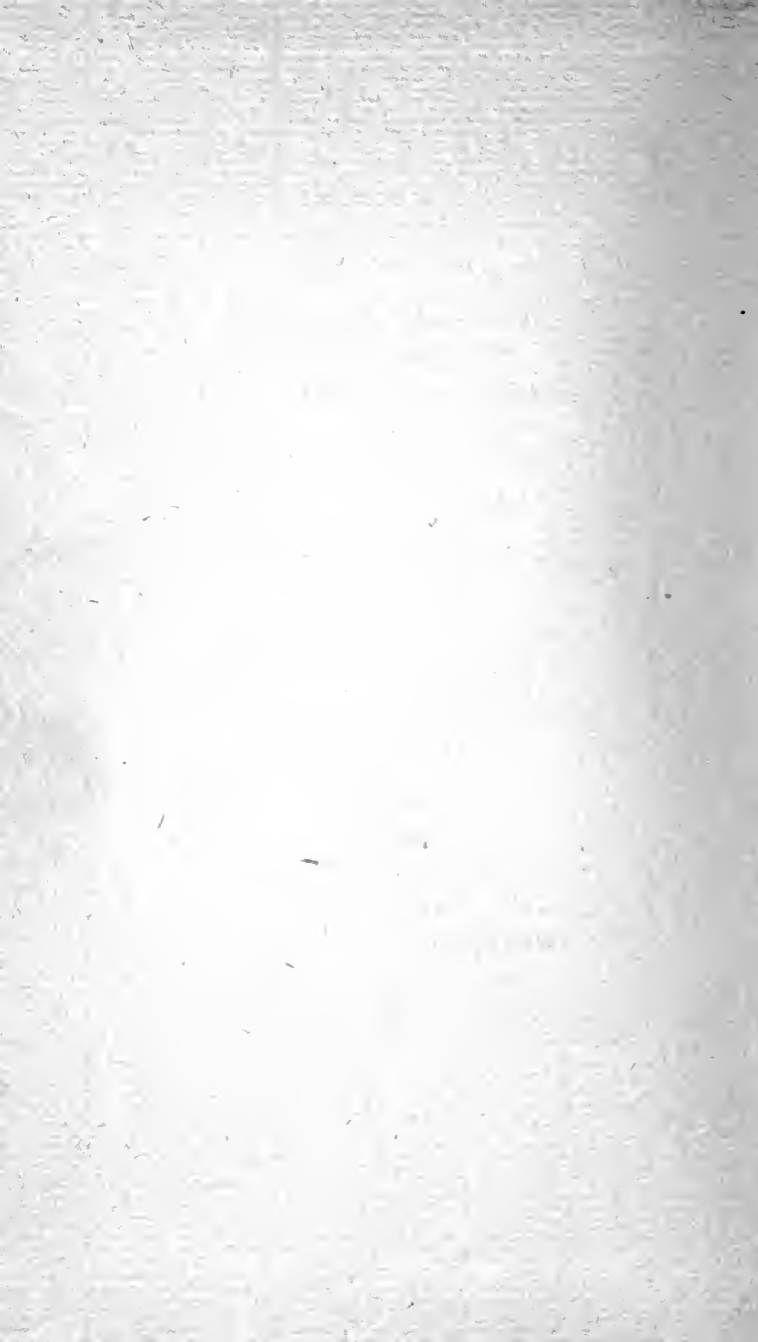


THIRTY NEW POEMS

BY
MARTIN ARMSTRONG

AUTHOR OF
"EXODUS, AND OTHER POEMS," ETC.

LONDON
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1918



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*All the songs here sung,
All the stories told,
Are but curtains hung
Before the old
Visionary shrine
Of things divine,*

*—But the earthly myth,
But the reflex pale,
But the tune wherewith
Things behind the veil
May be sung
In our mortal tongue.*

*So that, as a dream
Radiant on the dusk,
Sudden light may stream
Through this mortal husk
And the soul's desire
Reach its fire.*

NOTE

SOME of these poems have appeared in *The Academy*, *The British Review*, *The British Weekly*, *The New Statesman*, *The Poetry Review*, *Poetry* (Chicago), and *The Quest*.

All were written before September 1914.

M. A.

France,
February 1918.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TAMAR	1
THE PROCESSION	9
PHAETHON	13
THE DANCER	20
THE LAST MAN	24
SEVEN LOVE POEMS—	
DISCOVERY	33
BODY AND SPIRIT	35
FLAME	37
A LAMENT FOR LOVE	39
GOLD AND ASHES	40
AT THE END	41
HYMN TO LOVE	43
FOUR IMPRESSIONS—	
GOLD	47
FIREFLIES	48
MIST IN THE STREET	49
THE FESTIVAL	50

	PAGE
MISCELLANEOUS LYRICS—	
THE RUNE OF LIFE	53
THE BALLAD OF THE SECOND EDEN	57
NOT AT HOME	59
GHANIM THE MERCHANT	61
THE SATYR	63
A SONG OF PARADISE	64
THE FLOWERING CHERRY	67
THE BEDCHAMBER	68
COBWEBS	70
THE SHADOW	71
THE SECRET	72
POPLARS	73
NIGHT	74
TO TIME (AUTUMN 1914)	76

TAMAR

TAMAR in her halls of stone
Hid in snow-bound wastes where lone
Icy summits towered above,
Languished for the deathless love.
Her eyes shone darkly with the fires
Of unappeasable desires,
And passion's fearful tyranny
Made her face like ivory.

Every wanderer she saw,
Tamar beckoned to her door,
Waved her scarf to lure him in
And search the godhead through the sin :
Hoping still despairingly,
Fiercely, wildly, each was He
Who out of the vastness roves
Bringing her the love of loves.

Mile on mile beneath her sight
Rolling desert, stark and white,
Flung in formless chaos lay,
Merged from white to deathly grey,
And lazily and hopelessly
Snow came drifting from the sky.
Joy, by no glad colour fed,
Withered up, and song fell dead
In the parched air : and Tamar stood
Stunned, appalled, a thing of wood ;
Till, a thrall to frenzied dread,
She felt white death upon her rush
In the terror of the hush
—Felt her throat and heart grow numb
And her soul, close-muffled, dumb,
Smothered under mounds of cold,
Icy fold on icy fold.
And in terror Tamar cried :
“ Shut the day out. Draw the wide
Crimson curtains. Fill the hall
Full of ruddy fire, and call
The singers and the dancers in.”
So, with flaring lights and din
Of harps and timbrels and the strife
Of bickering shapes and colours, life

Surged into her heart again
And her soul forgot its pain.

Small her respite ! Not for long
Pleasure's changing siren-song
Lulls the memory of the soul.
Soon the old eternal dole
Clamoured at her spirit's gate,
And with eyes grown keen with hate
Back she drove the glittering show :
Dancers, singers, trembling go
Huddled from her presence. She,
Lone upon her balcony,
Like an eagle, hungry, fierce,
Stands again, with eyes that pierce
Blinding wastes for one that roves
Bringing her the love of loves.
And lo, her urgent vision traced
Lone life moving on the waste,
Black and tiny as a fly,
A point in the immensity.
Mute she watched it from her tower
Growing larger hour by hour :
Watched it coming, watched it grow
To a pilgrim : far below

He stood and the gaunt, snow-stricken air
Whispered of darkness and despair.
But Tamar at her turret door
Stirred and with eager soul once more
Felt the endless hunt begin
And, thrilled with hope but sick with sin,
Waved her scarf to lure him in.

Slaves received him from the doors
Into glimmering corridors ;
Bathed in water, perfumed, warm,
His body wearied by the storm ;
Clothed him in a robe of blue
Wrought with crimson dragons ; drew
Golden combs along his hair ;
Set on every finger rare
Jewels thieved from buried kings,
And round his ankles, golden rings ;
Turbaned him in gold and green,
For the pleasure of the queen.

All night long the reeling rout
Danced to shut the vastness out,
Danced to blind the wistful soul
To the vision of her goal.

All night long without a halt
Rang beneath the crimson vault
Stir and beat of a hundred feet
In the loom of dance that, shifting, fleet,
Its web of sumptuous colour wove;
And the driven slaves unresting strove,
Urging on the maddened throng
With stinging cymbal, beaten gong;
While the jewelled censers hover
Over Tamar and her lover.
But at last, when wan night seemed
To stir a little as she dreamed,
And the burning spices failed and died
To powdery ashes, and, outside,
Myriads of glittering icy spars
Gleamed beneath the freezing stars,
Weariness upon them came
And in Tamar's eyes the flame
Shrank and faded, and she raised
Looks with chill revulsion dazed
To her lover's face, and lo,
It was empty, hollow. So,
Wounded by the spirit's sword,
Lesser wonders grow abhorred,

Tamar made a little sign
As she pledged him in the wine,
And the dancers ringed him round
And to the stinging timbrels' sound
Urged him laughing to a door.
Far beneath in endless roar
Echoed the icy torrent's call,
And icy air winged round the hall.
Then the slaves in ghastly dance
—Ah, the white horror of his glance—
Flung him backwards. The ravine
Howled beneath: the stark moon's sheen
Lustred many a plunging wave,
And shed a wonder o'er his grave.

Shut away the midnight chill
And let each gusty torch grow still.
Evermore must there remain
The unassuaged immortal pain.
And of him? A tragic, rent
Memory of disillusionment.
But the frosty stars of morn
Glimmered on the tower forlorn
Where again pale Tamar faced
Grimly the uncharted waste.

And to the icy stars of eve
Round another pilgrim heave
Void grey hollow and stark mound
Desolate from bound to bound.
And from the stricken mountain-side
Tamar, pale and hungry-eyed,
Feeling in her bosom ope
Doors of old insurgent hope
And the endless hunt begin,
Waves her scarf to lure him in.

* * * * *

Fierce tiger ravening on thy way
In quest of still diviner prey !
Eagle, who from proudest flight
Still hungers for the spirit's height !
Stern pilgrim ! Uncompassionate lover
Who, raging onwards to discover
Eternal Love, with quenchless lust
Flings ancient loves into the dust !
O rose, whose boughs in patience climb
Flowerlessly the rungs of Time,
Flowerless till thy golden flowers
Fill with many hanging bowers

All the close of Paradise !
Move, O Soul, with steadfast eyes
Strong to pierce the lures which blind,
Tirelessly enduring, wise.
Keen as panther after hind,
Forge thy fierce unswerving way
To the everlasting prey.

THE PROCESSION

PAVEN grey,
The triumphal way
Clove the plain like a javelin-head,
Circled the hill in a broad progression
And up to the white acropolis sped :
Waiting the feet of the great procession
It lay to the noonday sun outspread.

Ninety columns of rough-hewn granite
Edged the way in a lordly line—
Rocks hewn down
From a mountain-crown
In giant ages by kings divine :
Each—the leap of a man might span it—
Towered as high as a forest pine.

Dust looms grey

Down the pillared way,

Foaming to gold where the sun breaks in.

They are coming. The noise grows deeper and
duller :

See, through the great blocks, out and in,

Flashes of sharp and insolent colour

Leap through the crowd with the marching din.

The rumour thickens : a fear ! a wonder !

Neighings and shouts and the tramp that casts

Like a smoking pyre

The white dust higher !

The pikes are clustered like harbour-masts ;

The chariot-wheels on the pavement thunder,

And the horses leap at the trumpet-blasts.

The heralds troop

In a serried group :

The long, bright shafts of their trumpets rise

Like sunrays over a mountain shooting ;

Fire on the bright brass flashes and flies,

Fierce as the raucous music bruited

Triumph up to the holloing skies.

Banners wavered with lazy flappings
Over the tall crests dancing there.

Like beasts afraid

The long horns brayed

Harsh through the hot and dusty air,
And the greens and scarlets of robes and trappings
Threaded the rocks with a sultry glare.

Now they strode

Up the mounting road,

Their rich barbaric music sounding
Tawny and fierce, till it shrank and paled
As the carolling cohort dwindled, rounding
The curve of the hill, and its echoes hailed
Far, from the loftier crags rebounding.

Flames from the foundering sun-ship leaping
Kindle the folds of its cloudy sails :

And the throngs that toil

Up the far slopes coil

Like the gleaming rings of a snake that trails,
On the breast and neck of the charmer sleeping,
The changing splendour of burnished scales.

In the phoenix-glow

Of the sunset, lo

A crown of fire were the far-seen crowds,

High on the terraced summit swaying.

The hill that rose to the evening clouds

Stood like an altar where, after the slaying,

Flames of the offering leapt and bowed.

And over that ocean of men impassioned,

Men whom the current of life bore high,

In the great repose

Of godhead rose,

Throned august in the golden sky,

From the pure white splendour of marble fashioned,

The porch of the Temple of Victory.

PHAETHON

PHAETHON, son of daylight's Charioteer,
Lordly, without a peer
In wrestling-schools, feeling swift youth aspire
Through all his limbs like fire,
Longed for immortal labour to content
The power within him pent.
Therefore he stood before his father's chair
And poured his burning prayer.
"O Father, hear me : by thy golden brow,
Grant me this favour now,
For I am weary of all dull toils that Earth
Gives men of mortal birth.
Lord, I would guide upon its sapphire way
The Chariot of the Day."
And long the boy besieged his father's ears,
Deriding all his fears,
Showing his tightened muscles with a smile,
So striving to beguile

The god's reluctance. "See, such thews as mine
Were made for toils divine."

Till, wearied at the ending of the day,
Apollo nodded yea.

The boy stretched joyous arms above his head
And crept content to bed.

And as the moon drew in her silver flame
His happy sisters came,
Took down the gleaming harness from the wall,
Led out the steeds from stall

And, lighted by a torch of burning tar,
They yoked them to the car :

Then round the sleeping boy watched silently
Until the hour should be.

But when pale Night drooped in her dying
trance

He rose with eager glance,
Flung back his purple chlamys joyously,
Shaking his bare arms free ;

Then up into the sun-car smouldering

He stepped with careless swing
And gathered up above the gleaming manes
The bunch of golden reins.

The stamping team, straining each tautened trace,
Sprang forth into void space.

Earth from her slumber stirred and felt the-morn
Break through her dreams forlorn,
Saw through the fissures of rent darkness run
The lava of the sun
And gild beneath her hood of dusky vair
Grey Twilight's streaming hair.

But upward o'er the vaporous ways they clomb;
The golden misty foam
Curled back from pawing hooves and ardent wheels,
As round the plunging keels
Of Tyrian ships the salt Ægean spray
Leaps at the water's sway.
Swifter they mounted through the misty whirl
O'er fields of furrowed pearl,
Through cloudy opal gorges, hills whose heights
Smouldered with lustrous lights
Like Tuscan slopes with fields of sainfoin rosed,
Past islands that reposed
Like violet-beds in lakes of coolest green
Far-sweeping and serene.

So did the radiance of the mounting car
Shed loveliness afar
Among the formless wastes of desert air,
Waking Elysium there.
And he that drove—the gold-haired charioteer—
With joy that quelled all fear
Grasping the reins with every muscle strained,
Still in his boy's heart feigned
To guide the steeds that with resistless force
Spurning the daily course,
Plunged up and down across the fields of air
And scorched with tropic glare
Earth's highlands—wrecked her piny mountain-
spires
With devastating fires;
Then, by a sudden lust for labour driven,
Leapt towards the blue of heaven.
But as the chariot o'er the zenith hove,
He felt the power of Jove,
For one immortal instant knew the might,
Throned in sublimest height,
Of watching Earth in terror far below
Expect its weal or woe
Slave-like from him. The boy stood there a god,
The world beneath his nod.

Yea, more than god, for a diviner flame
 Shot through his mortal frame
 Than ever thrilled the gods who dwell serene,
 Unmoved by joy or teen
 Or that strong ferment, purging sin away,
 Of growth and of decay.
 For he, a mortal urged before the strife
 Of hope and growing life,
 Had sounded all the rich ascending chime
 From earthly to sublime,—
 Transcended all the bounds of mortal state
 And snapped the laws of Fate.
 Though God sent forth his retribution grim
 What mattered it to him?
 What matter if the choking hand of death
 Should stop his eager breath
 Now, when no lust for some untrodden goal
 Lured-on his hunting soul;
 Now, when no more lay hid for him the seven
 Mysteries of Earth and Heaven?
 His soul had known more noble, vivid things
 Than poets and ancient kings;
 For not by length but richness of its days
 Man's life earns power and praise.

Therefore with all life's fullness satisfied
He stood in steadfast pride
And, slowly smiling, saw without alarm
God lift his awful arm.

Children of Earth in dread beheld above
Black cloudy galleons move
To rumorous war—felt, like a whirring flail,
Lightning and wind and hail
Burst on the vineyards and the fruitful fields
Heavy with autumn yields.
The forest like a labouring vessel heaves
And hosts of storm-stripped leaves
Whirl from the boughs, and branches, riven back,
Snap at the wind's attack.
The herds that rove on grassy hill and mead
Scattering in wild stampede,
With bellowing fill the tempest's interspace;
And men in terror race
To groves and temple-courts, to offer there
Burnt sacrifice and prayer.

High on the flashing axle of the storm
One saw a shining form

Spring heavenwards, heard his last exultant cry
 Leap through the shivering sky,
As eagle-like he welcomed for a guest
 God's lightning to his breast.

Out of the tumult of a wrathful heaven
 The corpse fell thunder-riven
And plunged into the streams impetuous
 Of swift Eridanus.

THE DANCER

HERE on this hill I stand
Breathing alone, and around on every hand
The things of the world, separate, lonely, divided,
—Grass on the slopes green-sided,
Browsing herds and the oaks and streams and rocks,
Women and men on the farms, white clouds above—
Live each their alien life that mocks
The beating heart of Love
That would make of all the worlds one pulse of
delight,
One pure, unsevered being, like water or light.

Standing alone and seeing
This world of stubborn creatures, each
Prisoned in its material form from reach
Of universal joy, I should go crazed
With loneliness intolerable,
Had I not the secret spell
To wrap them in flame, to catch them up amazed
Into a holocaust of being.

Now let the dance begin.

From the soul's secret places I release

The rhythm that shall not cease

Till earth and sea and all the stars are kin.

I move. With arms that like an eagle hover

I circle slowly, solemnly. The air,

Stirred from its peace, clings round me like a lover.

Slowly the things of earth begin to share

My swirling motion. Heavily every tree

Puts off its ancient immobility

As, when the miller frees the hissing race,

Under its urgent speed the lumbering wheel

Slowly, reluctantly begins to heel,

Conquering the weight of sloth and gathering pace.

My whirling quickens, till the mass

Of every tree puts off its separate form

And flowing on the air like streaming grass

Flares backward on its going in a storm

Of flying green. I am become the core

Of a great vortex. Every rocky mound

Leaps from its lone existence, melts, is drowned

In fluid life, ringing my dancing-floor

With a transparent wall, wherethrough I see
The valley-farms and pastures and far hills
Caught into the current of my ecstasy

Whose widening whirlpool fills
Unmeasured space. Peninsulas and sounds,
Oceans and islands and the shining mounds
Of golden cloud dissolve to swimming streams
Of blue and gold. Mountain and continent,
Waked from the death of their dividuous dreams
Grow live with rapturous courage to be blent

And passionately borne along
Into this ecstasy of speed and song.

Now is the consummation. Furthest stars,
Remotest constellations of dead space,

Forget the pride that bars
Divine escape and leap into the race
That floods all planes of being and devours
All isolation. Life entire is merged
Into my single spirit, which spreads and towers
Flame-like and fountain-like, an essence purged
Of all reluctance. I, the song that rings
Above all singing : I, the fire that glows

Beyond all fire : the love whose brooding wings
Cover all loves forever : I, the throes
Of laughter unexhausted : I, the Seeing
And the thing seen : the servant and the lord :
The burning lover and the love adored ;
Sing the divine exhaustless song of Being,
Flame-song and fountain-song of the tameless
power
Of joy which is the germ and branch and flower
Of all existence.

Then, upon the height
Of towering rapture, having sudden will
To taste my power, I check the spirit's flight,
Slacken, stop short. Life like a spinning-top
Reels sideways, loses poise, and races
In dying whirls. All things grow dense and drop,
Separate, still,
Into their ancient places.

THE LAST MAN

Out of a sleep of a thousand centuries
An angel woke to ancient memories
Of earth and man and Eden, and he turned
And o'er the bars of space his vision burned
Until the world rose clear beneath him there.
Golden with August sunlight was the air,
And wind hissed softly in the green secrecies
Of heaving elms and fluttered above the seas,
Whipping the spray to tongues of rainbow flame;
But nowhere any man or woman came.
And much he wondered, seeing by sure advance
Nature in ancient, proud luxuriance
—A panther in the jungle, a prowling thing—
Slowly, stealthily recovering
Her old domain : with branches serpentine,
With thongs of bramble, with a smothering twine
Of great-thewed ivy, throttling, tearing down
Man's proud imaginings. The towering town,

Cathedrals built to be God's vaulted throne
Like high fantastic forests turned to stone,
Old palaces deep-quarried from the earth,
Lapsed slowly back to her who gave them birth.
Idle was everything that man had made :
Ovens and factories spawned no angry shade
To quench the blue : their slender chimneys reared
Pure, smokeless shafts like minarets ensphered
In rosy air, and overwhelming tides
Of muffling ivy clambered up the sides
And loosed the slating from the warehouse roofs,
And wreathing vines and roses wove their woofs
On rotting shed and church and empty street.
Still squares lay deep in grass : no sound of
feet
Rang on the pavements, but between the flags
Rank toadstools thrust their heads, and spongy
quags
Devoured the roads that showed like healing sores
Reclothed in healthy grass. The marble floors
Of galleries and museums heaved in mounds
Like ruined graveyards, echoing to the sounds
Of jackdaws. Offices stood blind and crumbling,
And railway-stations desolate save for the mumbling

In the warm meadowsweet of roving bees.
And everywhere the gardens, orchards, leas
Were turned to matted jungles. Herds and flocks,
Once tamed by men, ran wild among the rocks ;
Yea, all that men had won laboriously
Returned to the old Earth-Mother's fealty,
And wildness prospered over hills and plains.

And then he heard a cracking in the canes
That edged a green lagoon. The slim wands
shook

And leant apart, and one with slow side-look
Stepped out and slowly climbed the rising ground.

A ragged woollen garment wrapped him round :
His beard and hair were matted as the dry
Grey lichen on a beech-bole. Painfully
But patient-eyed, courageous to endure,
He sought a quiet place to die secure
From beasts and snaring thorns ; so climbed the hill
And gained the crest and stood there very still.
He was the last of Men, that tyrant race
Whom outraged Nature drove from Earth's scarred
face,

There on the sunny crest, lonely and dumb,
He stood and waited till the end should come.
And the angel saw that this was Eden's crest
Where Eve and Adam rose at God's behest
Long æons ago. But that belated one
Began to mutter out his thoughts alone :

“ So all is over. As a mountain spring
Bubbling and sparkling, an immortal thing,
Dries, in one August hour consumed; so we,
Our works and all this passionate ecstasy
Of living, loving, hating, sink beneath
The reconciling waveless calm of death.
O terrible equality, decreed
By brute Compulsion ! So our every deed,
Our heroisms and agonies, have evolved
Like figures in a dance,—equation solved
Under one fatal law; one law for all,
Man's glory and the moss upon the wall.”
And great in wrath, he set his heart to curse
The teeming earth and Nature, eyeless nurse,
Who guides our way through evil and through
good
To fill the needy mouth of Death with food.

But lo, an opening rose before his eyes
Stirred in the scented wind of Paradise :
Her crimson beauty snared his angry heart
And anger thawed, and through the barren smart
Of hate, he felt like early blossoms press
The ancient ecstasy of loveliness.
Through golden evening, like an eastern sage,
He pondered o'er the rose who, for no wage,
For no dull purpose of utility,
Delights to bloom and wither and to be.
A passing loveliness, a radiant health,
Rich with the soul's unmerchutable wealth.
And then he spoke :—" Yea, 'tis enough to grow,
To feel great passions stir us and to know
Power through defeats and sorrows ; to create
Beauty and nobleness. For surely Fate
Is child of Time and Space whose little reach
Touches not Spirit, nor in Spirit's speech
Are any words for these, for Spirit exceeds
The scope of things material, nor heeds
The ways of memory and oblivion
Or transience and survival : all are gone,
Straws on a spate. Therefore I turn again
Serene into the dust, for, last of Men,

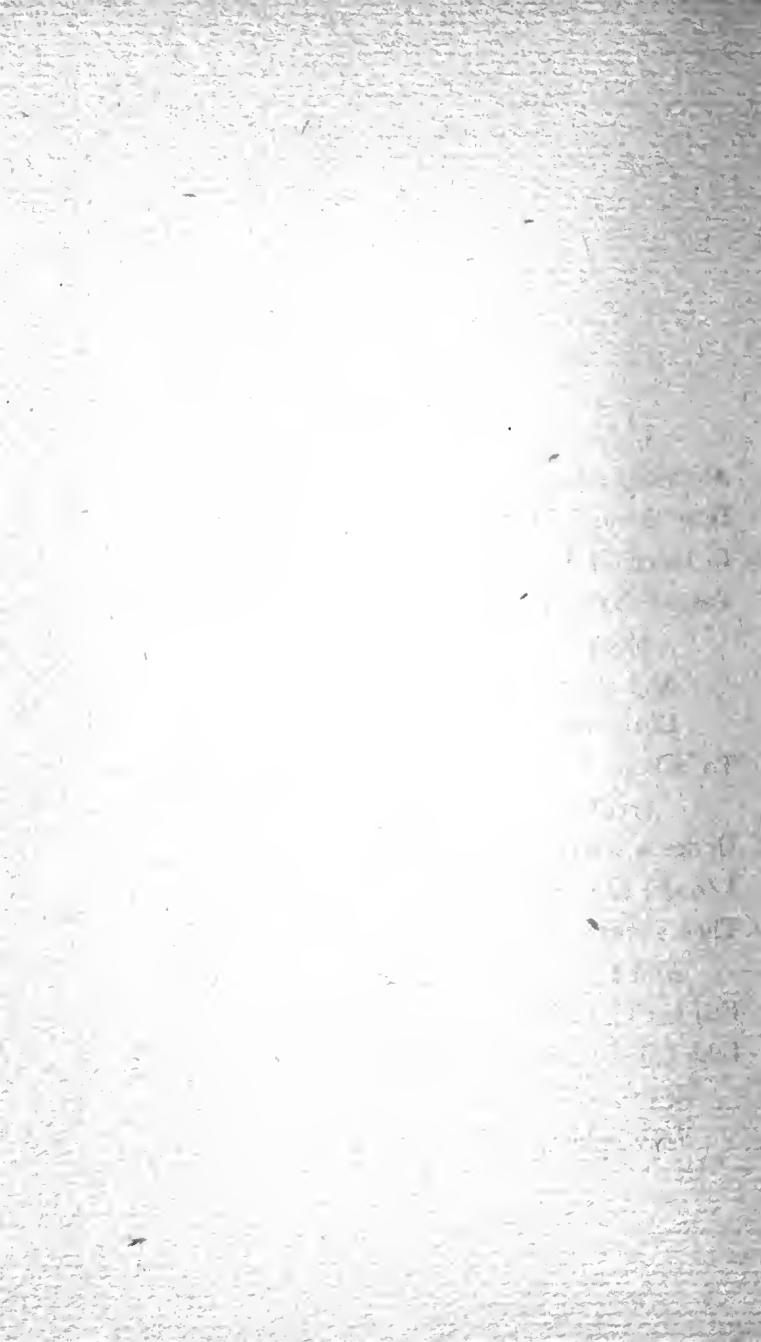
Here in the ancient Eden I have stood
And viewed man's life and seen that it was good."

O blackened trunk of a tempest-ruined tree !
O monument to dead nobility !
Alone and brooding far into the night
The figure stood in darkness on the height,
—Lone, adamantine image, dumb and gaunt.
The owls were loud about their ancient haunt,
And nightingales in forests far behind
Called to the buried passions of mankind.

And he who leaned across the bars of space
Heard all and wept and turned away his face.
And soon it was forgotten that on the crust
Of one small mote in the swarming starry dust
A fever spread, which for a little span
Flourished and waned and bore the name of Man.



SEVEN LOVE POEMS



DISCOVERY

ANOTHER autumn dies, and I remember
How she and I together through the town,
In the chill desolation of November,
Passed lighted panes and alleys haggard and
bleak

And streets rain-weary, dumb;
Until, when we were come
To where our ways diverged, we stopped to
speak

Under a street-lamp. But, as I looked down,
I found her face turned up and looking at me :
Then sudden brightness leapt across the dusk
And every binding husk

Fell back; and life went towering up
Like lighted spirit in a cup,
Quiveringly, exultingly,
Into a blossom of wild flame.

And I, like one sprung into sudden fame,
Through the dead streets walked wonderfully apart,
Feeling my ancient fetters broken asunder

And body, brain, and heart
Radiant amid this new-created wonder.

BODY AND SPIRIT

IN the wrapt silence of the green midnight,
—Dead, save that in the height
Stars moved : still, save that fell
Timid lisp of leaves that awake and shiver—
The eternal lapse of time, grown audible,
Rose up into my hearing like a knell,
Exhaustless, large, sustained : and in that river
I knew myself grey driftwood rolled along
In loneliness forever.

But it was not for long,
For soon Love's knowledge like a golden gong
Rang flaming through my spirit, and time was
nought,
And life and death, earth and the stars were
caught
Suddenly into a holocaust of song.

We who alone are wise
Seeing we have the sign to exorcize
This ghost of desolation, let us tend
 Love's fire until the end :
So shall this mystery of living be
No more the ebbing of a restless sea,
Flight of a fretful bat which never settles,
Whirled dust in windy vaults that never reposes :
Not these, but a pilgrimage delighted, wise,
Through the translucent dawns of a thousand petals
Into the golden heart of the Rose of roses.

Wherefore be patient, tender, wise, forgiving,
 In this strange task of living ;
For if we fail each other each will be
Grey driftwood lapsing to the bitter sea.

FLAME

ONLY the fire of love can fuse and burn
This solid world to spirit. But we two
Have caught love back by the escaping wing,
Therefore shall life be perfect; for our eyes
Are opened and our stooping souls stand up
Full-statured under the roofless heaven of Love.

Open the doors of Infinity : bring forth
The golden cups and pour the kindling wine.
So shall we drink and see, with hearts made
 wise,
Dead rocks and metals tense with whirling life;
Rivers and seas and meres and the streaming
 winds
Sure, ceremonial move to the pulse of change;
Yea, spirit shall see how from the teeming
 earth

Waving trees and the beautiful lives of flowers

Flicker like tongues of fire ;

Shall see how man, the bright untamable spirit,

Leaps and aspires and burns upward for ever,

A quivering flame, beyond the flaming stars.

A LAMENT FOR LOVE

O CITY of Love made desolate and forsaken,
Thy towers of soaring joy discrowned and broken,
Thy broad and shining pavements torn and
shattered,
Thy fruits untimely from the tall trees shaken !
No more from airy belfrys shall be woken
Ecstatic harmonies at noon that scattered
Rapture of life through all the streets and houses.
No more the doves of Venus perch and flutter
Among thy happy roofs, nor sun is golden
On garden-walls, nor Love himself carouses
In thy red banquet-hall. But silence utter,
Darkness and desolation, and the olden
Wordless complaint for lovely things defeated,
Beauty destroyed, and Love slain ruthlessly.
And in the world the ancient sigh repeated,
And in my heart the end of life for me.

GOLD AND ASHES

I, FROM Love's servitude escaped at length,
Closed the door of my heart and ceased from care.
"Never again," I said, "shall his golden snare
Bind my heart and cripple its soaring strength."
Knowing not what I said, for soon thereafter
Joy was dead. Unheard was the ageless laughter
Of winds and waters; beauty paled on the breast
Of the loveless earth, and the light of eternal
wonder
Shrank in the moon till the waves were dark there-
under :
And lo, I held in my hands the guerdon of rest,
And it was a bowl of ashes.

O better to love, though stung by a thousand
lashes,
Wounded by woes without number
And scorn and abuse,
Than live forever in peace like passionless lumber
Grey with the dust of disuse.

AT THE END

THROUGH a twilight of fading violets and dead
roses

Lo my belov'd returning
With shining eyes and the old remembered smile :
And as a rose with the passion of new life
burning

Slowly, deliciously every petal uncloses,
Deep in my heart some sweet thing stirred. The
while,

Trembling I stood, shaken with fear and wonder,
And round us ghosts of all long-departed lovers
Broke to a pæan, as we, long driven asunder,
Breast to breast, like winds from opposing quarters,
Rushed together. O singing of dead lovers !
And lo, it seemed that a great wave burst above
us,

Drowning the ears with ringing, reverberant waters,

Blinding the eyes with the light of rapturous tears;
And all the things that wound and the things that
 sever,
Corroding anger and bitter, remorseless years,
 Were gone like smoke for ever.

HYMN TO LOVE

LORD of all rapture and delight,
Lord of all bitterness and tears,
Who art the spirit's piercing sight,
Who art the fire that burns and sears;

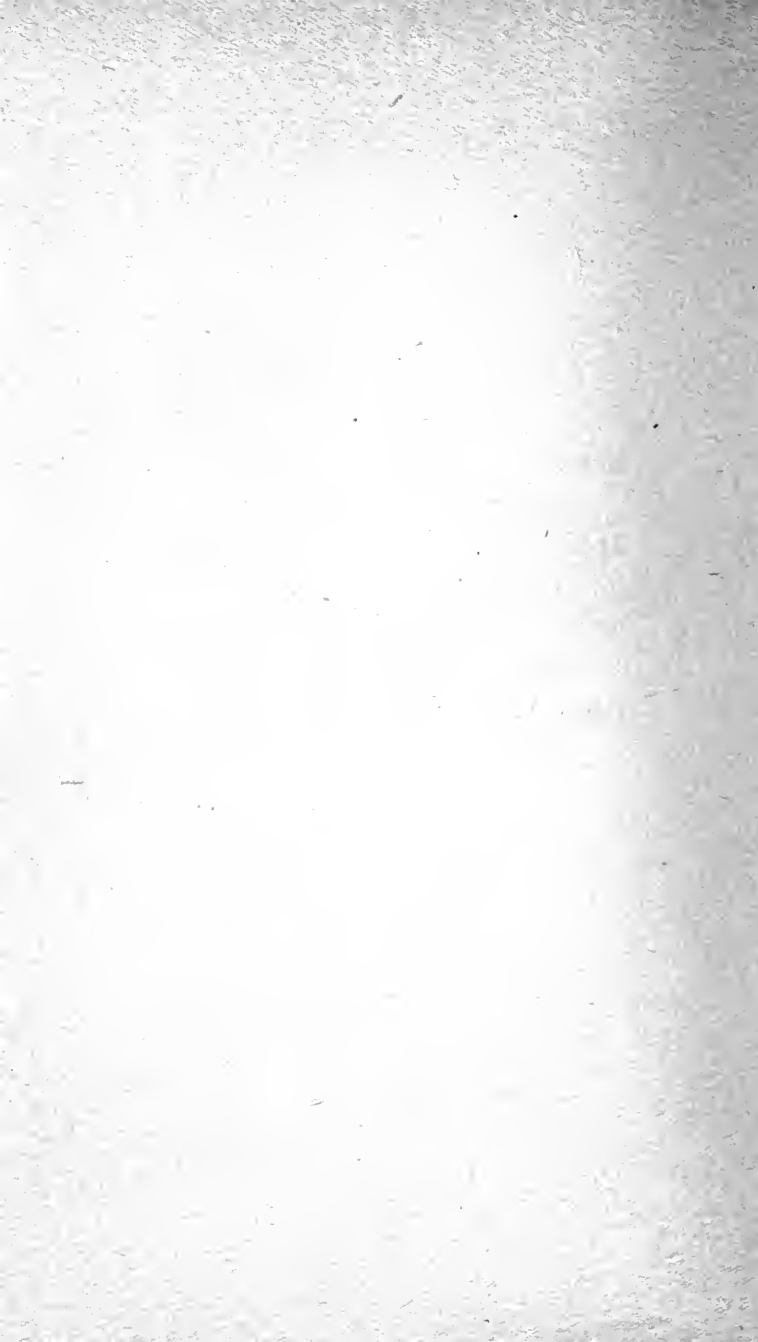
Why wilt thou turn thy hand to break
Thy children groping in the dark,
Whom thine atoning touch can make
Kindle to spirit, spark to spark?

Ah, not for sport or careless lust
Thou sett'st on some thy golden seal
And flingest others in the dust,—
Poor bodies crushed beneath the wheel.

But we, in bondage to thy nod,
Know only when thine eyes are kind
We walk in Paradise with God :
Thou turnest, and we stumble blind

To cower 'neath Fate's relentless scorn
With covered head and tortured breath,
Or with a fortitude forlorn
Fall on the sanctuary of Death.

FOUR IMPRESSIONS



GOLD

EVENING is tawny on the old
 Deep-windowed farm,
And the great elm-trees fold on fold
 Are golden-warm,
And a fountain-basin drips its gold
 'Mid gleaming lawns
Where mellow statue-bases hold
 Their gilded fauns.

FIREFLIES

STARS in the dark sky wake
And through dark bars
Of olive-trunks the fitful fireflies wink :
Glassed in the dusky hollow of the lake
Their dropping lanterns sink
Among the still sheen of a thousand stars.

MIST IN THE STREET

“THE quiet day has neither tears nor smile :
Time halts and rests awhile.”

“Blurred in a mist of milky violet
Material things are dreams.” “Is it evening yet ? ”
“Not yet, it seems ; for when the hour is due
Lamps will awaken in the deepening blue.”

THE FESTIVAL

DANCING in the square.

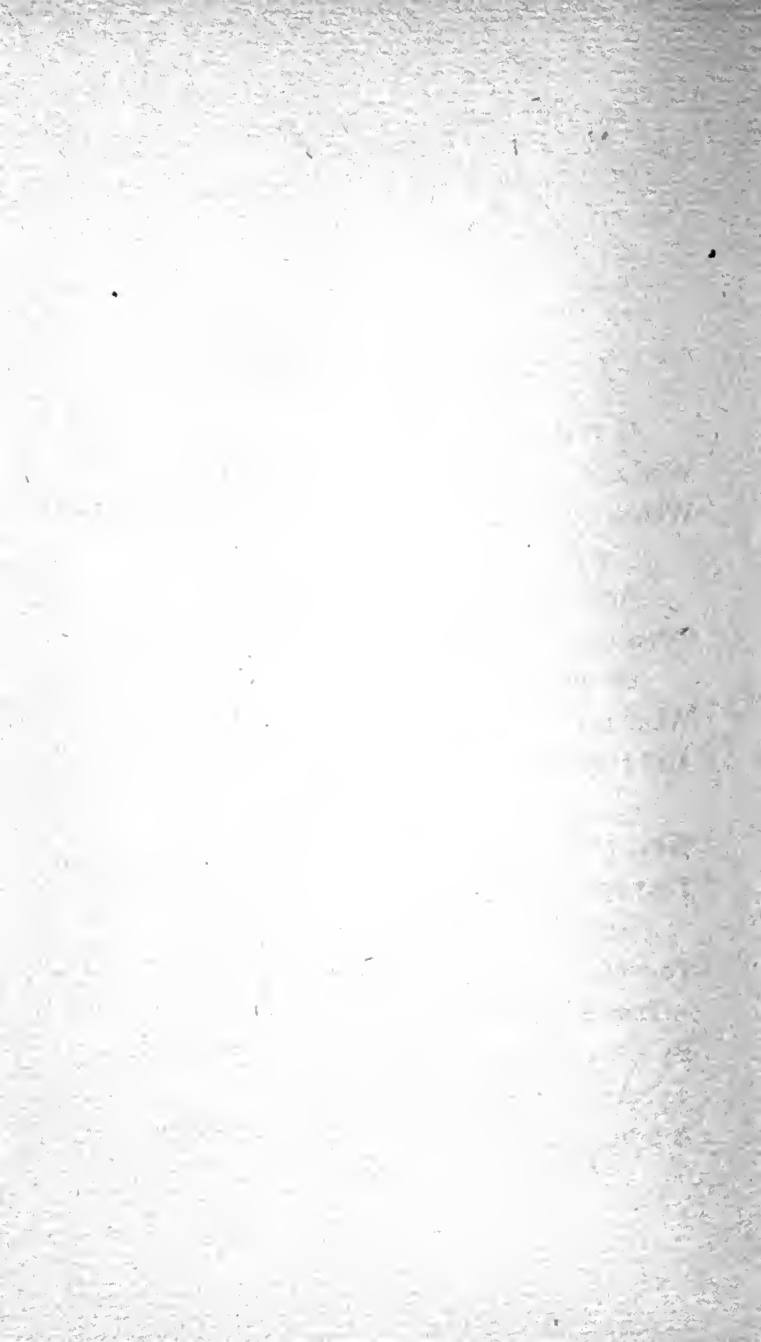
In and out among the dancing fountains
Flutter the bright shawls of a thousand dancers.

Dancing of boughs in the air.

Dancing of banners on their scarlet poles.
And turbulent in their towers the dancing bells
Make clamorous answers.

High into calm air rolls
A hot and glittering noise. Its dying knells
Freeze into silence in the dreaming mountains.

MISCELLANEOUS LYRICS



THE RUNE OF LIFE

O WORLD of endless life,
World of hurrying feet and ardent breath,
Where bloom the deathless flowers of love and
 strife,

And all things are but Death !
Towards what unfolding mystery, what birth
 Of ultimate fire,
What perfect white creation, does this mirth
And tragedy of growing life aspire ?

What unimaginable prize is sought
That rocks of windy crags and mountain-crowns
 And those that men have wrought
To walls and pavements in their swarming towns,
—That seem forever hushed to a charmed trance
By the soft touch of sunlight and moonlight,—
 Are each a whirling energy,
A firmament that swarms with starry flight,

Toiling inexhaustibly
Through the appointed ritual of its dance
Towards this unknown destiny?

What wonder half revealed,
What promise beckons from the sky's blue calms,
That over every olive-yard and field
Small eager lives lift upward-straining arms,
Till all the southern leas
Are alive and radiant with anemonies
Burning, dancing, singing all together
In the golden weather :
And the wild cherry, when the sap leaps higher,
Joyously, without fear,
Bursts to a white foam of desire
Upon the margin of the year?

What light was flashed from heaven's supremest
spire
That evermore along the winds of space
The planets fling their fiery manes,
Urging the everlasting race,
Till on the white edge of the starry plains
The comet of their one desire
Receives them into universal fire?

How was this seed of blossoming rapture sown,
This joy unshakable,
Whereto men's souls vibrate as to a tone
Struck from a golden bell?
That (though their bodies waste and agonize,
Though love departs and mortal beauty dies
And all things perish in the stream of change),
Strongly above this seeming ruin and dust
Their seraph-winged imaginations range,
And there, with more than hope, with more than
trust,
With certainty that lives like burning flame,
Perceive that throbbing source from whence they
came,
Which with delight and song and golden laughter
Builds up the universe from base to rafter
To work its endless aim.

World of impassioned strife,
O world of straining arms, aspiring wings!
All this great muttered rune of life,
Full of receding depth and rapturous height,
Is but the music that the spirit sings;

Out of all things that be
Building its broad evolving symphony :
Whose end we know not, for the light
Blinds us, and the dull brain
Flies not beyond the limit of its chain :
Only the soul, aware,
Laughs in its glee and asks not Whither nor Whence,
Having its flower-like being in mere sense
Of life and growth ; for spirit has no share
In time and death, the children of despair.

THE BALLAD OF THE SECOND EDEN

God, seeing men and women dare,
Patient and proud, to face despair,
Felt shame that the great choice he gave
To those unproven by the grave.

He said, " I will, for heroes' sake,
The noblest man and woman take :
They who have looked on death and pain
Shall make the awful choice again."

He spoke : the centuries were gone
And all their offspring ; and alone
The woman and the man stood there
Breathing the Paradisal air.

Only to each did there remain
The memory of all joy and pain
That life about their ways had shed.
Then God unto the woman said :

58 THE BALLAD OF THE SECOND EDEN

“Thou knowest life. Behold the tree
Whence thy first parents plucked for thee
All sorrow and all martyrdom
And the deep joys that spring therefrom.

“Choose freely. If it be thy will,
Keep Paradise unshattered still.”
Then, hiding in the leafy ways,
He watched them with a burning gaze.

But they, like saints that with calm breath
Go smiling forth to talk with Death,
Arose with brave, unflinching eyes
To pluck the Apple of the Wise.

Then God, beholding they did eat,
Came and knelt trembling at their feet.
“Yours be the empery on high,
For ye are greater souled than I.”

NOT AT HOME

“CALLERS! Good God, they’re coming up the drive.

Quick, the back door!

Our towels are in the passage.” “Man alive,

You’ve spilt the cigarettes upon the floor.”

And panic-stricken across the hall they fled;

Slipped through the kitchen. “Save us, that’s their tread

Upon the gravel. Jane, the front-door bell!

We’re out.” “You naughty boys ’ll have me tell

More lies,—and to the vicar too?” “No lie.

Behold, we’re gone.”

So off like hunted hares across the rye

And down their secret pathway to the wood,

Not daring even to breathe until they stood

Under green leaves alone!

Each saw his reflex wavering in the pool
And felt the wind's touch cool
Upon his shoulders, as he threw his coat
Beside the broken boat.

Flinging their clothes away, they seemed to fling
Propriety, convention, everything
Clogging and irksome, after ;
Felt in their hearts the old pagan glee revived
And the play of dappling sunlight on their skin ;
And naked, unimprisoned, full of laughter,
White spirits cleansed from sin,
They shouted loud, ran to the brink, and dived.

Then as they floated through the eddying swirls
Slung lasso-like from the fall that hisses and foams
Or sleeked to a brightness like the hair of girls,
They saw through waving wreaths of beech and oak
Blue deeps of heaven, and one laughed softly and
spoke :

“ God save us from all callers and At Homes.”

GHANIM THE MERCHANT

OVER the deserts golden beneath the noon,
Urging the sloth of his cumbrous caravans
Rode Ghanim, craving for his shadowy home
In Araby—his palace of delight
Where in the scented gardens he reclined
Through the warm evenings when the petals fall,
Strewing the ways like shells from tropic seas :
For all the place was tranquil with the age
Of cypresses whose glooming monoliths
Pillared the dusk; and down the vista'd walks,
Silvering many a violet interspace,
Tall, slender shafts of fountains soothed the air
With broken chattering. Lazily there he watched
The supple dancers choose their steps and clink
Gold ankle-rings and undulate their arms
Like sluggish snakes : or closed his eyes until
He felt the kindling tapestries of Heaven
Burn their celestial colours across his brain ;

While coming Night that stars the cypress-tops
Called flocks of soft-winged visions to increase
His rich imaginings. So would he repose
Alone after his wanderings and hold
Silent communion with the thought of God.

THE SATYR

SOFT falls the sunlight's dappled print
 Upon the grass beneath the beeches
In shining discs that dance and glint
 About her feet : like ripening peaches

They glimmer through her muslin's folds
 And gild the tangles of her hair,
While in her listless hand she holds
 A yellow rose and, dreaming there,

Still follows where her visions lead.
 But to and fro behind her seat
A satyr pipes upon his reed
 A music so divinely sweet

That hearing it across her dreams
 The tears grow starry in her eyes
For nymphs that loved the wells and streams
 And perished garden-deities.

A SONG OF PARADISE

Under the smile
Of crystal skies
On a holy isle
In Paradise,
I watched the sails
Of wingèd skiffs
Where the blue sea pales
Round dreaming cliffs ;

And here and there,
Serenely swung
In the flawless air,
The white birds hung ;
And round my feet
And above my head,
Clustering, sweet,
The windflowers spread.

Then a grey wind over the water flew,
And all the world was born anew;
 For each swift boat
 With its small white wing
 Was the gliding note
 Of a viol-string;

And the birds that swung
In the limpid air
Were a carol sung;
And the windflowers there
Were the silver singing
Of harp and horn,
Carolling, ringing,
Divinely borne
Round and round
In eddies of sound.

But while I listened,
The sweet sounds glistened,
Fluttered, and drooped in a magic calm,
And, changed again by a heavenly charm,

Froze to the scents of a thousand roses,—
Scents that hang like a mist divine
When June with golden key uncloses
Treasure of every garden-shrine.

* * * * *

To vision that burns through form and show,
To wisdom born of the Spirit, lo
 All lovely things
 Where God reposes—
 Flowers and wings
 And the scent of roses,
Viol and horn and the harp-string's measure—
All are the ghosts of the soul's deep pleasure.

Therefore I wrought
By my soul's might
God's golden thought
To my own delight,
There in the smile
Of crystal skies
On a holy isle
In Paradise.

THE FLOWERING CHERRY

BRING here no golden flagon

With crimson wine of courage filled to the brim :

Nor opal wine of dreams, in a goblet dim

With the coils of a jewelled dragon :

Nor frosted silver cups of the pale wine of sleep :

Nor tapering glasses of wine that is sly and merry :

For I of a cool sweet well have drunken deep

From a small white cup that dropped from the
flowering cherry.

THE BEDCHAMBER

HANG up the tapestries of Sleep
Whose heavy purple folds can drape
Chambers round with visions deep,
Woven with many a slumberous shape
That moves through maze of drooping vines
And slowly from each dusky grape
Crushes the juice of drowsy wines.

Let a rushlight-star illumine
The grim Madonna in her niche :
Behold her, streaked with light and gloom,
Scowling like an evil witch.
Here shall spice, on embers spread,
With slender shaft of smoke enrich
All the gloom about the bed.

Open the windows to the lake
And let the milky air unfurl
Wings in the listening room to make
Those shadows round the rushlight curl,
And the woven shapes move on the wall
Unsurely, and the smoke-stem swirl
Slowly from the vertical.

COBWEBS

Busy life within, without,
Has no corner free for doubt.
Busy life without, within,
Has no loophole left for sin.
But when stress of living ebbs
Sin and doubt spin dusty webs;
Till a hanging shroud disguise
Even the blue of Paradise.

THE SHADOW

HER loosened hair in auburn strands
Flowed back : in both extended hands
A bowl of yellow fruit she bore ;
 And on the tall
 Sun-whitened wall
Her shadow hurried on before.

Her limbs across her fluttering veil
Were clear and round and honey-pale
And softer than the fruit she bore :
 And on the wall
 Her flitting small
Grey shadow hurried on before.

THE SECRET

You little thought that, as we lazed
And talked of light, familiar things
While sunset opened golden wings
Until your Flemish mirror blazed

And pewter on your dresser there
Was lustred with a rosy fleck,
My spirit stood behind your chair
And flung his arms about your neck

And laid his cheek upon your hair
And drew slow fingers down your dress,
Weeping because you would not share
The burden of his loneliness.

POPLARS

IN the pale evening by the silver lake
Three poplars stood and shivered in the breeze
Which, filtered through their light-hung leaves,
 did make
A sighing like the wash of wizard seas.

It seemed a spirit stirred among the trees,
Mourning for ancient wrongs and griefs turned grey,
The sound uprose and dropped by slow degrees,
Uprose and dropped, but never died away.

Now, while the wind flickers my lamp and jars
The loosened panes and buffets at the door
And settling cinders drop behind the bars,
I think of those grey poplars in the frore
October midnight on the misty shore
Ceaselessly sighing beneath the moving stars.

NIGHT

O RECONCILIATION of the dark,
Enfolding hills and forests, skies and seas,
Cities and wildernesses; bringing sleep
To all whom destiny allows to sleep!
I, sleepless and content, lie still and drink
This pause from all confusion, this respite
Even from great endeavour, bathing my eyes
In the deep umbrageous blue, drowning my ears
Under the assuaging silence of the dark.
For now, when human sounds are muted down
And lost, like stones that sink into a pond,
In deeps of silence; when material things,
Robbed by the slow withdrawal of the light
Of all dividing colour, merge to one
Unsevered blue; the liberated sense
Hears patient, untumultuous tides of power
Stirring the ocean of eternal things
Through life and death and beauty and decay,

In everlasting rhythm : whence the soul takes
New stores of power and patience to endure
In broad serenity the visitings
Of good and evil seasons and all those
Exultant pains and agonizing joys
Which are the wave-crests of evolving life :
And whence is drawn the wisdom to perceive
That life and death are but the episodes
Of one great blossoming that is to be.

TO TIME

(*Autumn* 1914)

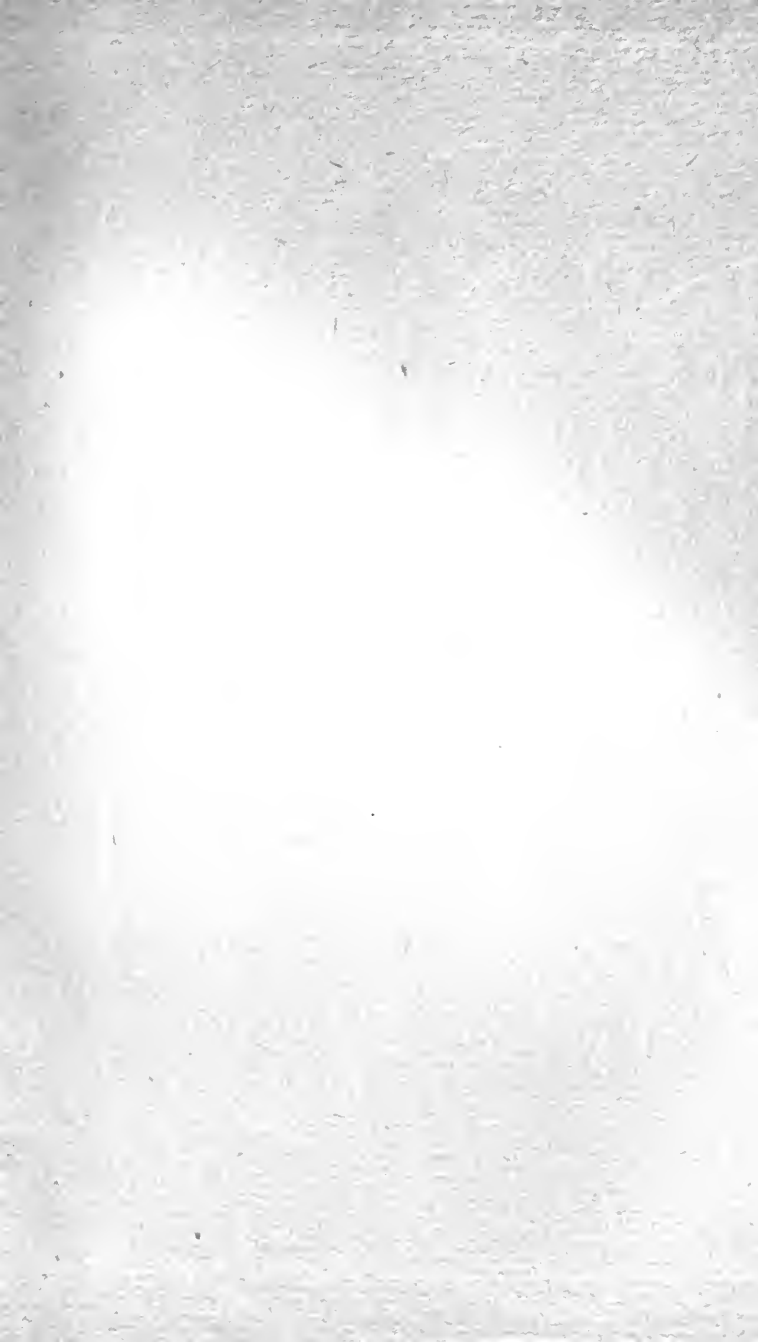
SOOTHER of sorrow, laying healing hands
On tear-exhausted brow and broken heart,
Restoring evermore with gentle art
Hope's blinded sight, Love's mutilated wing,
And desolation of war-stricken lands;
Abolishing things evil, gathering
With hands serene and sure
All souls beloved and treasured, all things pure,
Into the golden immortality
Of life which thou createst ever new;

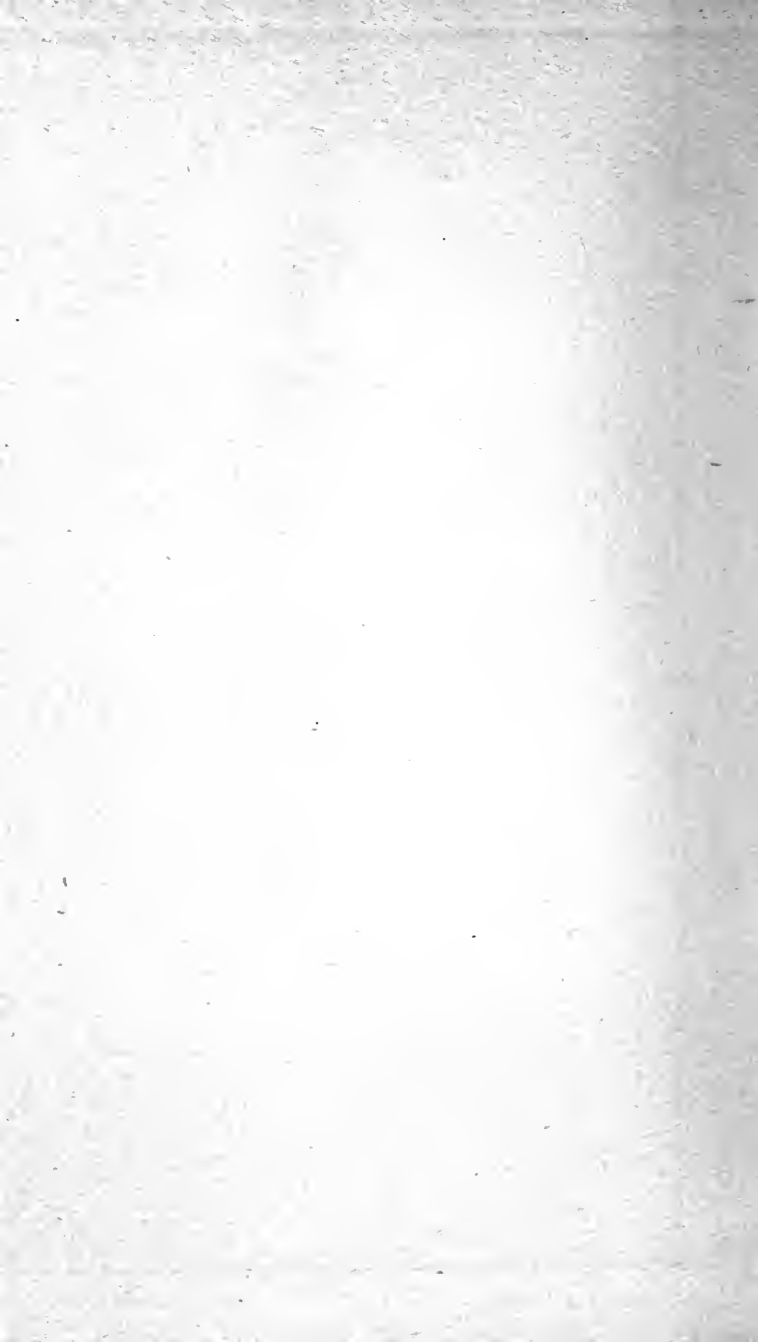
While we 'mid ruthless devastation view
How through the mounting years unceasingly
The slow untroubled process of the earth
Still out of death brings soaring life to birth,

O steel our hearts to patience, so that while
The reapers open many a golden aisle
Among the standing wheat, our souls may
dare
Perceive the good to come from this despair.

THE END

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